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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000077

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [AF](#) [IT](#) [AFGHANISTAN](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY POISED TO CONTRIBUTE PRT FOR GHAZNI

REF: A. 03 STATE 303817

[1](#)B. 03 ROME 5320

CLASSIFIED BY: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR THOMAS COUNTRYMAN FOR REASON 1.5(B)(D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST. ITALY IS LIKELY TO STAND-UP A PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM (PRT) TO COVER PARTS OF GHAZNI PROVINCE, ACCORDING TO MOD AND MFA CONTACTS, BUT WOULD PREFER TO DO SO UNDER NATO COMMAND. ITALY WOULD LIKE USG INPUT (AND WILL SEEK NATO/SHAPE INPUT AS WELL) ON THE LIKELIHOOD THAT AN ITALIAN PRT COULD OPERATE UNDER NATO COMMAND, PERHAPS WITH INTERIM SUPPORT FROM OEF FORCES, BEFORE ISSUING A FINAL RESPONSE TO REFTTEL A REQUEST. SELLING THE CONCEPT TO PARLIAMENT WILL BE CONSIDERABLY EASIER IF THE PRT IS UNDER NATO RATHER THAN OEF COMMAND, HOWEVER, ITALY DOES NOT WANT TO UNNECESSARILY DELAY MOVING FORWARD WITH A PRT. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) A JOINT MOD/MFA REPORT ON A DECEMBER INTERAGENCY TRIP TO AFGHANISTAN TO EVALUATE THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTRIBUTING A PRT CONCLUDED THAT ITALY CAN STAND-UP A PRT TO COVER PARTS OF GHAZNI PROVINCE, ACCORDING TO FRANCESCO TRUPIANO, DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR TO DEFMIN ANTONIO MARTINO. THIS TRACKS WITH OUR RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH MFA NATO AFFAIRS OFFICE DIRECTOR GIOVANNI BRAUZZI AND REAR ADMIRAL CLAUDIO DEPOLO, DEPUTY COMMANDER OF ITALY'S JOINT OPERATIONS COMMAND, ALTHOUGH EACH INDICATED SOME CONTINUING DEBATE OVER THE PRT'S LOCATION. TRUPIANO SAID MARTINO, WHO HAS LONG SUPPORTED GREATER NATO RESPONSIBILITY IN AFGHANISTAN, HAS BEEN URGED BY BOTH THE FORMER AND CURRENT NATO SECRETARY GENERALS TO PUSH THE PRT CONCEPT WITHIN NATO, AND WOULD LIKE TO USE THE ITALIAN PRT TO MOVE THE DEBATE ON NATO'S ROLE ALONG. IT WILL ALSO BE EASIER TO GET PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT FOR A PRT OPERATING UNDER NATO VICE OEF COMMAND, TRUPIANO NOTED.

3, (C) BEFORE ISSUING AN OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST, TRUPIANO SAID ITALY WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE WITH THE USG, NATO AND SHAPE THE POSSIBILITY OF SETTING UP SHOP IN GHAZNI UNDER NATO. TRUPIANO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT NATO MAY NOT BE READY TO PROVIDE FULL SUPPORT TO THE PRT. IN FACT, THE ISAF COMMANDER IN KABUL TOLD THE VISITING INTERAGENCY TEAM THAT ISAF IS DEFINITELY NOT READY TO ASSUME GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES YET. TRUPIANO QUERIED WHETHER PERHAPS OEF WOULD BE WILLING TO PROVIDE INTERIM ASSISTANCE. ITALY WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE COMMAND ISSUE RESOLVED AND THE PRT ON ITS WAY BY THE JUNE NATO SUMMIT IN ISTANBUL. IT WOULD SERVE AS A CONCRETE EXAMPLE OF THE GREATER ROLE NATO IS PREPARED TO PLAY IN AFGHANISTAN, TRUPIANO SAID.

[1](#)4. (U) KABUL MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.
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